

**CENTER FOR  
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(CSIS)**

**WAR AND DECISION:  
INSIDE THE PENTAGON AT THE DAWN OF THE WAR ON  
TERRORISM**

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RAYMOND F. DUBOIS: Let me introduce myself. I'm Ray Dubois. I'm a CSIS senior advisor and I will be your moderator this evening for the Doug Feith panel. Let me, on behalf of John Hamre, our president, welcome you to CSIS. John is in Beijing, otherwise he would be welcoming you. I hope to hear from him in another day or two to see how his meetings there went.

This evening, as you all know, we are going to hear from Doug Feith, the author of "War and Decision: Inside the Pentagon at the Dawn of the War on Terrorism." Doug, as many of you know – and I'll just briefly recount a couple of items from his background – he currently teaches at Georgetown University. He's also a visiting scholar at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard and a distinguished visiting fellow at the Hoover Institute out at Stanford. He was, of course, undersecretary of Defense for policy for five years, but he also served in the Reagan administration on the NSC staff as a Middle East specialist and in the Pentagon as a deputy assistant secretary of Defense for negotiations policy.

I want to point out that the proceeds from this book, the revenues that Doug will realize, he will give to a charitable foundation that will use those funds exclusively for the benefit of veterans and their families. I asked the staff this morning to find out how his book was doing: it's number five on The Washington Post bestseller list hardcover non-fiction and number 19 on The New York Times bestseller hardcover non-fiction – (applause) – notwithstanding that neither of those two newspapers have reviewed it yet. (Laughter.)

We will then follow his brief presentation with our panelists and James Risen of The New York Times will speak first. He has been a reporter for The Times as well as the L.A. Times. He is the author of "State of War: the Secret History of the CIA and the Bush Administration" and as most of you know is a Pulitzer Prize winner for his investigative stories on the NSA surveillance of international communications and the terrorist finance tracking program; Pulitzer Prize awarded two years ago.

He will be followed by Larry Di Rita, who – excuse me – since 2006 May has been with the Bank of America but for five years was, among other things, the acting assistant secretary of Defense for public affairs and special assistant to Secretary Rumsfeld. But during that time, for approximately three, four months, I think it was, Larry volunteered to go to Baghdad, to go to Iraq first with Jay Garner and the ORHA, or the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance, and then he spent a few weeks with Jerry Bremer as a senior policy advisor at the Coalition Provision Authority in Baghdad. He had been, prior to coming to work at the Pentagon, a chief of staff to Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison of Texas and was the deputy director of foreign policy and defense studies at the Heritage Foundation.

Our very own Dr. Fred Iklé, on the end, will speak last. He is one of our distinguished scholars here and author of several books, most recently a book entitled “Annihilation from Within.” He was undersecretary for policy during the Reagan administration and served for presidents Nixon and Ford as the director of the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, which as I found out recently, Doug Feith worked for Dr. Iklé when he was a young intern while studying law at Georgetown University. I don’t suppose that Dr. Iklé is going to give us an indication of how that young intern performed, but we shall see. Dr. Iklé is also a member of the defense policy board.

After Doug speaks, the panelists – and the panelists speak, I’m going to give them an opportunity to rebut or comment on any of their fellow panelists’ remarks if they choose to do so. Otherwise I will open up the questions to questions from the audience. Now, here at CSIS we have some rules of engagement for Q&A’s, and I’m going to hold the questioners to no more than a couple of minutes, and so please wait for the microphone although it’s a fairly compact room, and identify yourself. Now, let me also say, and it will come as no surprise to anyone here, that like the author and the panelists, almost everyone has a strongly held view about the period in question, not to mention the actors and how they behaved, but let’s be kind to each other and not necessarily obsessively lecture ourselves on those opinions. Now, I will also try to hold the responders to three or four minutes in order to give as many people as possible an opportunity to chew on, shall we say, some of Doug’s thesis.

Now, before I give Doug the podium, I did want to share with you a couple of personal observations. And like most policy mavens and pundits in this town, you buy a book such as Doug’s and what do you do first? You go to the index. And it should come as no surprise to find that all three of our panelists are cited in Doug’s book in one way or another and therefore, I suspect, one could say possibly co-conspirators – no, not that.

I, however, to some shock and disappointment, did not find my name listed in the book. (Laughter.) Now, my wife said, aren’t you relieved? But Doug was actually kind enough to honor what we – what Larry and I used to call the code of the special assistant, which is to be neither seen nor heard except in the confines of the secretary’s office. But I can personally vouch for much of what is in Doug’s book because I was there, although in most cases I was in the background. But I was also there – for those of you who read his book, especially the beginning chapters – I was there that fateful day in Europe on September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001.

I was with Dov Zackheim, the comptroller of the department – excuse me – I was the, at that point, the deputy undersecretary for installations and environment. And Dov and I were expecting the Grafenwoehr Army Military Training Center. And that next day, the morning – at about 4:30 in the morning as I remember, we all gathered, that is to say, Dov and I along with Doug and J.D. Crouch and Peter Rodman and then-lieutenant general John Abizaid who was the J5 on the joint staff and Bill Luti. And we flew back to Washington. As Doug describes in his book, that was a rather interesting plane ride. And we came back to a still burning Pentagon to meet with the president that afternoon. And I will tell you that while – during my five years in the Pentagon, I focused as most of

you know, on domestic defense issues but I was never very far from the discussions about Afghanistan and Iraq. And I can tell you were I to write my book of my Pentagon experiences, I would hope that I would be as even-handed and un-strident – I guess two words that are not often associated with Washington, but I would hope to be as thorough as Doug has been. Not that we all agree with everything he said but one cannot disagree with the documentation, the thorough research, the rigorous scholarship, the documents that he cites that are printed, reprinted in his book. These and his contemporaneous notes clearly indicate a great deal of effort has gone into, as he will tell us, telling the truth.

Now, let me close before Doug gets up here and just comment and paraphrase a little bit of what Brett Stevens said in his Wall Street Journal review of Doug's book. And he said that Doug understands that policymaking often involves choosing to accept one set of problems over another. Now, that's not an insight, necessarily, that's going to sway public opinion about the war or the war's aftermath, but it is indispensable in my view to understanding both the choices that have already been made and those that lie ahead for this administration as well as the next.

Ladies and gentlemen, Doug Feith.

(Applause.)

DOUGLAS J. FEITH: Well, thank you very much, Ray. It is an honor to have this opportunity to be here at CSIS, which is an institution that I have a very high regard for. I appreciate what you said in your introduction and in advance, I say that I also feel very honored that we have such an accomplished panel that would be commenting on the book.

I've been doing many interviews about my book in recent days and I've heard from many journalists and others that the book surprises them. It tells a story that contradicts key parts of almost all the major books about the Iraq War. For example, it refutes the notion that President Bush came into office determined to go to war no matter what, that the administration refused or failed to consider the arguments against war. In fact, as the book reveals, the most serious analysis of the downsides and the risks of war was produced in the Pentagon by Rumsfeld and his top advisors, not by Colin Powell, Rich Armitage, George Tenet, or other officials who are reputed to have been the voices of caution.

My book contradicts the common allegation that Pentagon civilians did not plan for post-Saddam Iraq. It explains what's wrong with the charge that the State Department had a plan that Defense officials discarded. It explains what's wrong with the charge that Rumsfeld and his advisors were dupes of the Iraqi exile Ahmed Chalabi, and what's wrong with the assertion that we intended to anoint Chalabi as the leader of Iraq. My book quotes extensively from previously classified documents, from numerous memos that were exchanged among Rumsfeld, Powell, Rice, Tenet, General Myers, the vice president and the president. It recounts numerous meetings and it does so not on the basis of after-the-fact interviews in which officials remember or pretend to remember

after the fact what occurred in those meetings, but on the basis of notes that I took while attending the meetings.

In writing the book, I made the radical decision that words would be put in quotation marks only if they were actually spoken by the characters in my history at the very time and place described. Among the main topics covered in the book is the development of the strategy for the war on terrorism in the hours and days after 9/11, a strategy that broke with U.S. counterterrorism policies of the previous decades, a strategy that aimed not simply to punish the perpetrators of 9/11, but much more ambitiously to prevent follow-on 9/11-scale attacks. For all the errors that the administration has made and the terrible problems we've encountered in recent years, especially in Iraq, and I discuss many of these errors and problems in the book, it's a notable achievement that we are six and half years past 9/11 and the United States has not been hit again as we were hit then. This owes something, I believe, to our strategy.

Another major topic covered in the book is the rationale for the Iraq War. I explain what the president and his top officials were concerned about, why Iraq was a problem made more urgent and more worrisome by 9/11 even though we didn't believe that Saddam was responsible for the 9/11 attack itself. The book reviews the issue of politicization of intelligence and the accusations of manipulation of intelligence. It explains the actual controversy between my office and the CIA over the intelligence on the Iraq-al Qaeda relationship. The actual controversy was not a clash in which Defense officials argued that there was an intimate Iraq-al Qaeda relationship while CIA officials argued for a more sober assessment. Rather, it was an argument about methodology and professionalism; it was about the criticism by Defense officials of the CIA's politicization of its own intelligence.

And perhaps most newsworthy, the book explains for the first time anywhere the key postwar plan developed by the administration, the plan for political transition in post-Saddam Iraq. It was a plan developed in the Defense Department and it aimed to prevent a prolonged U.S. occupation of Iraq. It was a plan to put Iraqis in charge of their own government promptly after Saddam's overthrow. It was a plan that built on our experience in Afghanistan, where the U.S. overthrew the Taliban regime but did not establish a U.S. occupation government. As I say in the book, it was a plan which my office drafted, Powell and Armitage tried to delay, President Bush approved, Jay Garner began to implement, and L. Paul Bremer buried.

Now, much of the latter part of the book deals with how this plan was undone and the harmful consequences that I believe resulted. While the book recounts controversies and debates, it does so in a way that I personally think is far more fascinating than the snide and shallow self-justification that is typical in memoirs of former officials. I've read lots of memoirs in preparation for this book. It's one of the things that's striking about them. I refer in the book to the I-was-surrounded-by-idiots school of memoir writing. I don't like that school; I find it boring and bad history.

While I was in the administration, I had many disagreements with other officials, but I generally thought that their arguments had important merits. When I disagreed, it was usually because I thought that an alternative strategy or policy had even more merit. In my book, when I present the positions of Armitage or of CIA officials with whom I disagree, I present them respectfully. I use language that I believe they would agree fairly represents their views. When I quote them, I strive to do so in context. I don't call them nasty names or try to kill them with adjectives.

For this reason, I think my book is not only civil, but it's a useful, accurate account, as accurate as one man's account can be. I care about accuracy. That's why I relied so heavily on the contemporaneous written record; that's why I provided footnotes and endnotes so extensively. The book is 530 pages long, more or less, with around 140 pages of notes and reproduced documents. And I want readers to pay attention to the notes, to read them. I'd be happy if they challenged me on my use and interpretation of the documents. I've created a website, it's called [waranddecision.com](http://waranddecision.com), where anyone can go and easily pull up the unclassified documents and articles and other materials that I cite.

I was very pleased the other day when Professor Dan Byman joked at a talk that I gave at Georgetown University that my website will strike fear in the hearts of professors across America. The idea of someone making it easy for people to check one's footnotes, a terrifying idea, he said, but he complimented it as the essence of scholarship. I want to invite all of you to read my book and visit [waranddecision.com](http://waranddecision.com) to plunge into the actual record of the fateful decisions of the Bush administration at the dawn of the war on terrorism. Thank you.

(Applause.)

MR. DUBOIS: Thank you. James Risen, you're next. You can sit – no, you can speak from there.

JAMES RISEN: Thank you. I just wanted to thank you all for inviting me and I, as a journalist, covered Mr. Feith and so now it's a very different experience to be on the same panel with him, so – (chuckles) – yeah, unique. But I just want to congratulate him for his book because I agree with him that this is a really useful contribution to what's burgeoning – the burgeoning industry of histories of the Bush administration.

And I think one of the problems, and he and I have talked about this, one of the problems the Pentagon had during that time period with the press was that they didn't talk to us or to very many reporters. And I think you get into this quite a bit in your book, is the degree to which the Rumsfeld team lost the leak wars of the early Bush administration and the middle years of the Bush administration is pretty striking. And I think Mr. Feith makes a pretty compelling argument that Rumsfeld lost dominance of the narrative history of the Bush administration and now it's – he, Mr. Feith and Mr. Rumsfeld, who I guess is now going to write his book as well, are trying to regain ground

in the historical wars of the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. And so I think that's going to be a fascinating dynamic to watch and I think this is a really interesting contribution to that.

And I think it's interesting, as a journalist, to see the degree to which Mr. Feith has taken on probably one of the hardest nuts to crack in here, and that's to focus this effort, is on postwar planning which is probably the most – I don't what you would – (chuckles) – what's the best word to – divisive issue maybe – that we are facing now as we look back on Iraq. And it's one – it's an issue in which everyone has gone to their corners and it's very difficult to dig them out of. And the issue of Ahmed Chalabi which is almost like a theological issue at this point. And so that will be interesting and I think this is an important first round of – (chuckles) – in that debate and the degree to which, I think, and I think you would agree with this, the degree to which your book is successful is the degree to which you can change the nature of this debate on Chalabi and postwar planning. Wouldn't you agree, to some degree anyway?

And I think that that is going to be fascinating to watch as we go get further and further from the heat of the moment and more documents like those that Mr. Feith has included have come out and more of the players on all of the various sides come out. But I think this, the first five years of this war, the Rumsfeld team really has been handicapped by, I guess, if it's Mr. Rumsfeld's dictum that they don't talk to anybody about these issues, whereas people at the State Department and the CIA and the White House did talk.

And – so I guess I would focus on that as the significance of this book, is that it's the first – it's the Rumsfeld team beginning to fight back. And as a journalist, you know, the more people who talk the merrier, and so this will be good to get more back and forth going. I don't think – unfortunately for Mr. Feith, I don't think he's going to resolve this debate. I don't think Dick Armitage or George Tenet's going to say, oh, you were right. But it will be a real interesting debate from here on out, where now we have both sides engaged for the first time instead of this more of a one-sided debate. So I would just say that's a real welcome change from where we were.

MR. DUBOIS: Thank you, James. Larry?

(Applause.)

LARRY DI RITA: Thanks, Ray. I do want to also echo what Doug said about – thank you to CSIS for hosting this and for you, Ray, for hosting it. It's terrific to be here, to be part of this. We would have had to get a much larger room because we were thinking of inviting the secret intel cell from Doug Feith's office, but we decided against that so we could have a smaller, a more intimate gathering.

I do want to just comment quickly on – I thought it was interesting to hear you say that we were – we didn't talk to the press but The New York Times managed to devote 8,000 words last Sunday to talking too much to people in the – but that's we can

maybe discuss that. The – (chuckles) – it was – you mentioned that we didn't leak enough and that's maybe a different problem.

I do – there's a couple things I want to talk about though with respect to Doug's book. One is I think it's the relevance about bureaucratic politics, which Jim did sort of allude to, is critical. I think an element of Doug's book that talks about how policy is made, and I don't think it was unique to the Bush administration under this president with Secretary Rumsfeld and Colin Powell; it's how policy gets made. And it's a lot of taffy pulls and a lot of people pushing and shoving and the degree to which the written word ultimately is a very powerful weapon. And to some extent, I find Doug Feith almost a perfect chronicler for Donald Rumsfeld's Pentagon because the dirty little secret about Rumsfeld is that everything he did, he put in writing. And he insisted on that kind of discipline. And it was always astounding to people that we weren't running around leaking to the press because it wasn't necessary. Everything he was doing he was doing in more or less the open within the constraints of classification and propriety of the issue.

And to the extent that Doug has relied heavily on the written documentation of this administration, it's the perfect marriage between the way that the policy was developed within – at least certainly the Pentagon, but I think also the administration broadly – the written word prevails and – or at least the written word gets there first. And for people to want to – he talks a little bit in the book about assertions and opinions versus the rigor of written documentation. And the one thing Secretary Rumsfeld insisted upon was that kind of rigor and the one thing Doug has done very well in his book is insist on a similar rigor and deconstructing the period. So to that extent, it's a perfect symbiosis.

The other thing I wanted to talk about briefly is a little bit of what I was doing. I was certain, precisely because of what Jim said, that nobody wanted to hear from the guy who was the Pentagon's spokesman tonight, but the one thing I did do that was kind of interesting during that period that Ray alluded to was I spent a little time with Jay Garner and Jerry Bremer in Iraq. And what we were over there doing and – in effect was executing the things that Doug speaks about in his book. There was a very clear decision that the president had made according to the process that I've alluded to and that Doug describes in terrific detail, that we were going to develop this Iraq interim authority and it was going to consist of some number of Iraqis who were going to quickly assume, as quickly as practical but whatever the president's terms were, they were going to assume responsibility for governing their own country. And it was a terrific concept based entirely on what we had experienced in Afghanistan where that was the right answer.

And so Jay went over. In addition to his other responsibilities, we were very clearly executing against that policy. And we had a number of interactions with sort of the interagency group back here who was sort of steering us. We were more or less just trying to get it done. We were moving around the country, meeting with Iraqis who were willing to come to Baghdad and set up this interim authority. And Doug's description of how that was first approved and on the basis of which it was first approved is important.

I can certainly say just from my own experiences without even having the benefit of detailed record that Doug describes, that's what people were doing.

Jay was essentially charged with beginning that, with the expectation that once the politics started to develop, it would be turned over to Jerry – or the Coalition Provisional Authority, not Jerry Bremer per se, but just a person who would go over there and get it done. And Doug, I think, does a terrific job explaining how that became – how it essentially got derailed and how that – through no overt decision on the policymaking level – that's just not what happened. But it was – Doug, I think, from the perspective of the Washington sort of decisionmaking level, how it got decided, and then from the perspective of Jay's work in Iraq and Jerry's follow-on work, how it was beginning to be executed. And then we deviated into a different direction for a variety of reasons, which again Doug goes into, and I think fairly, to everybody involved, I can only say – is worth further – I mean, I think people will start to pick that apart a little bit.

Doug's laid out some important documentation that you should look at in terms of how the – the basis on which the IAA was generated, the meetings that were held prior to the war in various places around the world, the involvement of State Department planners in that process and the importance of that involvement and Zal Khalilzad, who eventually became the ambassador and Ryan Crocker, who is currently the ambassador, were directly involved, and they were there doing most of the hard work on behalf of Jay and the team, I think will be a sort of very useful next chapter to Jim's point that the whole development of the policy and the execution of the policy, I think, awaits further, even further sort of mining of the record.

And so I congratulate Doug for having done a terrific job essentially laying a marker for, look, we've had all the sort of journalistic type memoirs, the journalistic type assessments. They have their place as the sort of first draft of things, but now the documentation and the record accumulation needs to be provided. And that's what I think Doug's book – essentially restarts the clock on that and it's an important book. And if you haven't read it, I certainly encourage you to do so. Thank you very much.

(Applause.)

MR. DUBOIS: Thank you, Larry. Dr. Iklé?

FRED IKLÉ: It's easy to criticize mistakes from hindsight. It's much harder to walk the reader through a labyrinth of decisionmaking in a divided government, especially a divided government presided over by an intermittently inattentive commander-in-chief. And it's harder still to do this with a sense of loyalty and decency and respect toward the senior officials who invited you to serve in this government. Doug accomplished all of this with his book and much more.

With enviable marketing skill, he lifted this book to bestseller status. This is fortunate because with his generosity that we heard about, his larger royalties will serve a very good purpose, even though they are well deserved for Doug himself. But it is even

more fortunate because it forces the commentators to take account of the carefully documented facts in the book and to stop repeating falsehoods about what went wrong in Iraq. Yet, at times Doug is too modest. Several chapters reach new heights in strategic insights and understanding of history. And he leaves the reader to underline these passages in red and to appreciate their full importance.

For example, he describes the frequent disagreements about the post-Saddam Hussein government in Iraq we just heard about. Iraqi politicians who had lived during Saddam Hussein's dictatorship, and particularly the infamous Chalabi, were strongly rejected by the State Department because allegedly they would lack legitimacy. And to organize elections, the issue of legitimacy also was debated by Paul Bremer and others. Let me quote on what Feith has to say about these legitimacy quarrels. "None of these judgments had any reality outside the subjective thoughts of the officials who asserted them. When Bremer said that caucuses were essential to make the interim government legitimate, he was not stating a self-evident truth or an objective fact; he was giving his opinion."

I doubt most of you have read everything that Feith had to say about the endless battle for and against Chalabi between the State Department and the Pentagon. Clearly, it was not a discussion about facts. Both sides were giving their opinion, and it actually turned out Chalabi later on received high praise from Bremer and from Blackwell, who was ambassador to India and then deputy to Condi Rice, clearly a State Department person.

I think Feith was truly right in observing that what are alleged to be objective facts in interagency deliberations quite often are personal opinions, but now I will turn the tables on his splendid book and apply this very point to one of his overarching themes about the post-Saddam Iraq problems. Feith and most of the Defense Department officials thought Iraqi self-government should be established quickly after the fall of Baghdad, as soon as possible, so that Iraqis would see us as liberators, not as conquerors. And the Iraqi exiles returning from abroad could make a great contribution, the Defense Department officials said. Ouch, this triggered in the State Department a roadside bomb called Chalabi. Thus, instead of discussing the verifiable facts about the feasibility, the benefits and risks of an early Iraqi self-government, the interagency process played billiards with their personal opinions about the returns of Iraqi exiles.

Based on Doug's outstanding report on how the government functioned or malfunctioned in managing the war in Iraq, it's my personal impression that the difficulties of self-government were insufficiently addressed because the Chalabi debate took up all the time. It was the inability and the long delay of self-government that exploits the Iraqi appreciation for the United States as liberators is, I think, misunderstood. It was not the delay of self-government; I think it was the inability of the United States after liberating Baghdad to maintain law and order, demonstrated by the shameful failure to stop the moving by absurd arguments used to defend the movers. As Doug honestly and delicately put it, this was not Rumsfeld's finest hour.

Feith also tells us that depending on planning papers for the future of law and order in Iraq, the papers which he is the main author, warned of social upheaval and violence between Shia and Sunnis. Now, the Sunnis, we know, are about one-fifth of the population, and we know that – they know that many of them would lose their jobs at previous position, might even be prosecuted. Now, how could you have an Iraqi self-government without some enforcement there behind it, namely U.S. forces. Now, maybe they should be called occupation forces, but in fact they had to occupy major parts of Iraq to try and maintain law and order, given this quarrel between Shias and Sunnis.

And we didn't even ask Saddam Hussein's regime to ask to form a formal surrender. The foreign minister, Tariq Aziz, was one of the first senior officials to turn himself in, and we might have – he probably would gladly have signed a formal surrender, which we could have used to signal our good intentions towards Iraq and thus gain legitimacy.

A most valuable contribution of Feith's book, and this is a delicate issue, is his subtle disclosure of the chronic insubordination in our government that the commander-in-chief has tolerated. Most reviewers of the book fail to notice Doug's disclosure of this because his frank sense of loyalty and decency made him describe it in soft forms and sketchy arguments.

For example, he writes, General Franks was showing little interest in his duty to establish order in one Iraq of the Saddam's overthrowing, little interest. Lacking dark sense of tact and decency, I would have called it; insubordination, little interest. Now, a president who's well served by his national security advisor does not have to roll up his sleeves and pummel all subordinates who fail to follow his instructions and guidance. Could you imagine a Henry Kissinger or a Zbig Brzezinski having tolerated this disorder in the National Security Council?

If you comb through the index of FISA's bill you will find the culprit, maybe, and let me give you a delicate hint. Now, many journalists and book authors have unjustly pilloried Doug Feith for mistakes that he did not make. The same writers produce a great deal of admiration of Condi Rice.

But now, let me close on a more cheerful note. Doug Feith, as the masterful writer he is, seated many observations, witty observations, into his most earnest chapters. For example, about Armitage: Armitage was a colorful character, a hulking bodybuilder with a foghorn voice. Then, he said about Powell, you know, the media's described Powell as dovish, suggesting wrongly that he advocated a solution of the war. Rather, Feith wrote, Powell became the leader of the neither-fish-nor-fowl faction. And about General Franks, following a discussion with Rumsfeld on training programs on Iraq forces, after Rumsfeld had left the room Franks walked over to Feith and he – Feith writes: He leaned over me, LBJ-style – remember LBJ, Doug recalls – and delivered in my face the unforgettable remark, Doug, I don't have time for this bullshit. But this bullshit event was a proposal that Rumsfeld had approved a few minutes earlier. And then, he had other unmentionable expletives, so I'd better stop here.

(Applause.)

MR DUBOIS: Thank you, Dr. Iklé. I was at an event last night honoring Barry Blackman (sp), a Democrat who serves on the Defense policy board, appointed to the Defense policy board by Donald Rumsfeld. It was an audience, an eclectic audience, of Ds and Rs, young and old, from various segments of each foreign policy group. Donald Rumsfeld showed up, walking through the crowd, shaking hands, talking to people, and someone turned to me and said, you know, how long does it take in this town for wounds to heal. And I said – before I could answer, someone said, as soon as the documents are declassified. I said, no, not necessarily. The criticism, or the immediate criticism, that we have seen from the press gets blunted when there is thoughtful reflection. But thoughtful reflection doesn't occur until the next administration, you see, because the next administration is often populated by the people who were the most vocal critics of the prior administration.

In any event, I want to thank all of the panelists and ask if any of them wish to, Doug, respond to any of your fellow panelists. Doug?

MR. FEITH: No, I think I'd just like to express appreciation for the commentary that everybody's made. My interest here is precisely what James Risen said, which is to try to contribute to a public debate on topics that are not only very controversial but enormously important to the country, and have been debated very intensely and often in a rather nasty fashion on the basis of a lot of misconceptions and errors. And my hope is that the debate, which this book is certainly not going to resolve, but my hope is that the debate, at least going forward, will be a little better informed than it's been to date. And, you know, if that's the case then I have accomplished something of which I will be proud.

MR. DUBOIS: Thank you. Yes.

Q: I just wanted to start the questioning before anybody else questions because it's something – if I could take a small privilege here – because it's something that fascinates me in the book and I just thought it would be something for you to expand upon now before people – if you don't mind – before people start asking questions. And that is the point that – you made this point several times in the book, about how looking back on the interagency process it was kind of murky to you even today. And that, to me, kind of is very resonant because as a reporter, it was damn murky – (chuckles). And I found it, as someone who was inside, that it was murky to you, and that gets to this whole issue that Dr. Iklé mentioned about management of the interagency process. And I was just wondering if you could talk about why you think – I mean, that's to me the great mystery of all these very experienced people, and they had this very dysfunctional process at key moments. I was just wondering – you can talk about it; I was just wondering if you could expand on that.

MR. FEITH: There are a lot of different models that have emerged over time on how interagency decision-making can be made, should be made, and actually gets made in practice. And one of the points that I make in the book is that there was a style that I saw when I was in the Reagan administration that contrasted with the practice in the George W. Bush administration. The Reagan administration also had very sharp, frequent debates between agencies, the State Department and the Defense Department in particular. But what happened in the Reagan administration is when issues could not be resolved at lower levels, and one of the things that the Reagan administration did, which was an interesting contrast, is the Reagan administration gave a lot of authority to assistant secretaries. And the main interagency meetings in the Reagan administration were the so-called IGs, right, interagency groups, at the assistant secretary level.

In this administration, the main meetings were all deputies and principals' meetings. They were done at a much higher level, and they didn't delegate as much responsibility down and the quality of the discussions, you know, varied because when you're dealing with people who are absolutely at the top of the government and have global responsibilities, they tend not to know, you know, the same degree of details that the assistant secretaries, who have narrower responsibilities, have.

But what happened in the Reagan administration which I think was especially interesting was when an issue could not be resolved at the interagency group level and it was important enough to elevate it, the National Security Council staff would put together clear-cut decision memos for the president, and those decision memos did not try to blend the positions, did not strain to find the common threads in the positions of the Defense Department and the State Department. On the contrary, they highlighted the differences between the agencies and tried to get to the core concepts that were in conflict, and then presented them to the president, and the president would resolve the issue by checking a box. I mean, he would look at the pros and the cons of the Defense department position, the pros and cons of the State Department position, and he would say I choose State's or I choose Defense's, or sometimes he would pick his own, you know, third way to approach it. And those tended to resolve that issue.

This administration took a different approach, and there was a great emphasis at the level of the principals, which is to say the National Security Council minus the president. When the National Security Council met without the president, it was called the Principals' Committee. And there was a great emphasis on trying to get issues resolved in the Principals' Committee, and to – as Condi Rice used the term, to blend or bridge the positions of the agencies, to try to maximize harmony at the level of principals by finding elements – that could be described as elements in common. And what I say in the book is – I mean, I can understand the motivation for that, and it was a way to try to take an administration that had some fundamentally different views and create a degree of teamwork, but the consequence was that on many issues, fundamental differences were essentially papered over rather than resolved.

MR. : Yeah, Doug. I think that the interagency issue and the role of the NSC advisor is going to be studied for many, many years and certainly the next administration's got to take some lessons from this one. Yes, Dr. Iklé?

DR. IKLÉ: How do you explain eight years' leisure in the Reagan administration, I have one addition to the remarks made earlier, and obviously, you're right. But there was something more, enforcement, so you couldn't have insubordination. I remember meeting with a very effective National Security advisors in the Reagan administration, Judge Clark, and we renewed one particular area under the responsibility of assistant secretary of State. And Clark read through a decision memo by the president, point one, two, three, four, five; made clear that none of these decisions were decided, and the meeting was adjourned. Half an hour later, that assistant secretary is gone. You need enforcement.

MR. DUBOIS: Okay. Let's take some questions from the audience. Yes, sir. Would you wait for the mike? Thank you. Identify yourself, please.

Q: Thank you. Mike Miazawa (ph). I have a question about Condi Rice, and Mr. Feith has already possibly replied to my question, but in any event, let me ask my question.

In your view, what is the role Condi Rice has played as National Security Advisor from the day of 9/11 and tax to the day of "Mission Accomplished" statement by the president? Was it very productive, was it very aggressive? Did she make any difference or – she has not really involved in the real policymaking process.

MR. DUBOIS: Thank you, go ahead.

MR. FEITH: I think she was deeply involved in the policymaking process, and if you get a chance to look at my book you will see, I think, important accounts of her role. I think that she – as I said, I mean, her approach was to deal with this problem of divided government. There were a number of issues on which there were fundamental divisions, and one of the main ones that I focus on in the book is the question of how the United States works with the Iraqis before the war.

And, I mean, this was alluded to in Dr. Iklé's remarks, and I mean, this was a fundamental issue. And it tied into the question of whether the United States would have a political conference, a series of political conferences, with the Iraqi exiles and the Kurds; whether we would train the Iraqis militarily; whether we would recognize a provisional government, and whether we would ultimately implement the Iraqi interim authority idea. The differences within the government over the attitude toward the externals was absolutely fundamental, and it paralyzed and undermined the government's efforts over and over again. And the approach that was taken in the interagency process had the flaws that we talked about. It was an approach where, when we couldn't agree on strategic-level issues, there was an effort made to see if we could agree just on the next

few steps. And if that was done then the issue was considered resolved, at least until the next few steps were taken.

Then you have the other point, which I'm very happy that Dr. Iklé highlighted, which is the issue of discipline. When decisions were, in fact, made because every once in awhile, an issue was resolved by the president, and when that happened there would be parts of the U.S. government that did not actively or openly oppose the president's decision, but they didn't support it either. And in some cases, when the State Department was supposed to implement things that it didn't quite support, it didn't argue against them in the councils of government. Secretary Powell, for example, on the fundamental question of war in Iraq, did not ever present an alternative to the strategy that the president ultimately adopted. There was no State Department plan that said there's a way to resolve this problem short of war.

On the other hand, as he made clear – as I say in the book – with his body language, Secretary Powell basically didn't support in a wholehearted, full-throated way, the president's policy. And that's where you to Dr. Iklé's point, which is when you have a problem like that – and it was quite obvious to everybody in the government that the State Department was not behind the president's policy and neither was the CIA in a wholehearted fashion – when you have a problem like that, there's a question of how do you discipline the government so that the president gets to make policy.

MR. : And whether or not the NSC advisor at that point should exercise some derivative power, if you will, from the Oval Office.

Okay, let's –

MR. : If you'll let me – if I can, though – to some degree, though – and I don't really have a problem with what Doug said, or Dr. Iklé. But the Iraq circumstances are so unique only from the standpoint that, you know, there was a history. And actually, Doug, one of the best things he does in his book, among the many fine things, is recount what the circumstances were in 2001, and there was a history and people had views, and there had been a lot of interagency work that had been done prior. And you know, when you were talking to these Iraqi leaders, it was almost like they were part of the interagency. This was the guy who was the State Department's guy, and he was the guy was the CIA's guy, and we had our guy. I mean, it was never as pronounced as was really unfairly caricatured as Chalabi's our guy and everybody else is good; it's just that they were views, and they had their patrons to some degree. They had people that they had worked for, for whatever reason, over time.

And so the idea that Condi or anybody else could have simply dictated that this was – that was the genius behind the decision, frankly, to do this fast because our ability to get in the middle of it and try and divine what makes the most sense, in hindsight has proved to be very limited. So the idea was look, these guys are going to have to figure it out on their own, so let's create an environment where they can figure out on their own. And once we walked away from that fundamental truth, it became a much more

complicated process and the idea that we could have checked a box on a memo and that would have somehow resolves it. I understand what the point is, but in terms of rocky policy it was – there was too much history; there was too much going on. So our decision, first and foremost, to just say look, we're going to create an environment where you guys can get into this and figure it out, and we'll step back and support you, was the right one and the decision to sort of deviate from that was the one that bears additional scrutiny.

MR. DUBOIS: All right, let's take a question over here.

Q: My name is Warren Merrick and I was Chalabi's case officer in northern Iraq in the mid-90s, and I know him pretty well.

MR. : But you're a good guy. (Laughter.)

Q: And I know him pretty well and you know, when I met him in '93 he was a businessman. He had the bank trouble already passed him but, you know, he was kind of moving along. He was a man without a state, almost, and it's difficult for me to understand how he got to be theological in Washington, D.C. I just really don't understand it. Poor Mr. Tarid Kaziz is the only other Iraqi you five gentleman mentioned besides Chalabi. Could you comment on that?

MR. RISEN: I may be – along with Doug, I mean, I've reported on this for many years. And I've talked to, you know, and I think you and I have talked before. And I think you understand that the poison that happened at the CIA with your superiors between Chalabi and after '95 and '96, and the covert actions that failed. I think though, ultimately, Chalabi, while he had problems with specific people at the CIA, it was more he was a symbol, I think.

By the time of the Bush administration it was – I mean, this is hard to quantify, but I think it was less Chalabi as Chalabi than it was as a part of a turf war, that it could have been any number of exiles, I think, although Chalabi was particularly radioactive. But I think it was more a matter of Chalabi as a symbol of the war, and Chalabi as a symbol of a Pentagon that, at the CIA and the State Department – I mean, I can tell you, you know, you were – (chuckles) – what the CIA and the State Department on the other side was they saw a conspiracy between Vice President Cheney and Don Rumsfeld to go to war, which – and they saw Chalabi as the stocking horse for that. And so it was really more of a turf interagency battle than it was specifically about Chalabi, although Chalabi was a very convenient part of that.

MR. DUBOIS: Thank you. Another question? Yes, here in the center. Got a microphone for him?

Q: Hi, Bill Lawrence from the State Department. I was the first Iraq reconstruction desk officer. And I didn't read your book entirely, but I just raced through a couple of sections, the future of Iraq section and any conclusions. And I find myself

completely agreeing with your assessment of what the future of Iraq project wasn't. I commend you for that, and I also find myself agreeing with the conclusions that I saw, in terms of the State Department and hearts and minds, and some of the points you're making at the end.

So please take the question I'm going to ask as in the context of me agreeing with most of what I've seen so far. But I'm going to challenge you on three things, just from my little perspective from where I was at the time, and see what your response is.

First of all, when I started in late '03 and then to early '04, the feeling was that the State Department, the future of Iraq, had been abandoned, and that one of the reasons Garner was sacked so quickly was that. He had tried to hire Tom Moore, and we were told at the time that when Bremer sort of didn't answer our phone calls, it was because – or our staff didn't get the lower levels at times – it was because he sort of knew he had to report to the Pentagon more than he had to State. So I wonder sort of what you think about that.

Second of all, the bit about Tom Warwick that doesn't – it's not the Tom Warwick I know, it's – you don't really footnote that section. And again, I'm just looking at one page in the book, but you said sort of I heard that Tom Warwick did this and I heard that Tom Warwick did that, and is it possible – I guess phrasing this – is it possible that that, in itself, was hearsay? It just didn't look like the Tom Warwick I know, and there was a misinformation campaign on himself that I became part of this whole toxic debate –

MR. DUBOIS: Okay, I think we got it.

Q: And then, the last point was – if I can just make my last one. I think you correctly identify legitimacy as sort of legitimacy issue is the main – one of the main issues around the transitional governments. And I just remember at the time that we had dozens and dozens of legal projects that were going on, which we saw as inappropriate for an occupying power under the Vienna convention. And those were the types of legitimacy arguments that went on. I don't think it was just about, you know, whether or not the leaders were legitimate, but there were also issues weighing on the –

MR. DUBOIS: Okay.

Q: I was wondering if you address those.

MR. FEITH: I think that one of the things that will surprise people who have invested in educating themselves about Iraq from the current literature when they read my book, is that they will find that the widespread view that the Pentagon and my office in particular was hostile to the future of Iraq project is wrong. And the main element of the future of Iraq project was the political transition section, and we actually thought that was excellent. And what it proposed was the early empowerment of Iraqis, and this was opposed by Secretary Powell and Rich Armitage.

And so, I mean, we found it absolutely wild to be in a situation where, in the public debate, the common view was that the State Department had a plan that the Pentagon hated, when in fact the State Department had a plan that we liked and we built on, and our Iraqi interim authority plan was drawing heavily from the State Department future of Iraq project. It happens to be that the State Department's leadership didn't like those concept papers and so, I mean, the ironies here are very thick and go far beyond mere inaccuracy.

And I mean, I think that the point you make about Jay Garner just gives me an opportunity to say something that I think is important to say because you used the term sacked. I mean, one of the great frustrations I know that Secretary Rumsfeld felt about this whole business was the reports that Jay Garner, who nicely and patriotically accepted responsibility, and then went and did exactly what he was asked to do, and did it for the limited period of time that we had promised him he would have to do it because he came away from his own company in order to do it, and I was the one who called him originally. I didn't know him before, but I called him at Secretary Rumsfeld's request to recruit him, and told him he would only have to be there for a short while. And when political and diplomatic matters were the main function of the U.S. ranking civilian in Iraq, he would be replaced with somebody with a different background; you know, a diplomatic and political background.

He was not sacked. He was replaced exactly as planned, and it really pained him and Secretary Rumsfeld to have a guy who had done a really good job and really deserved a lot of praise and admiration and gratitude, to be described as sacked. And so I'm glad I have a chance to straighten that out.

MR. DUBOIS: Okay, let's get one or two questions. Fago (ph), do you have a question?

Q: (Off mike.)

MR. FEITH: On legitimacy – the legitimacy debate existed at a lot of levels, and the gentleman makes an interesting point about how it functioned at, you know, maybe some of the institutional levels that he's referring to. What I deal with in the book is there was a very large concept of legitimacy that Jerry Bremer used as the basis for this argumentation as to why we could not empower Iraqis early. And the essence of it was he said that until the Iraqis have a constitution and elections thereunder, they will not have a leadership that is legitimate, and to whom we can transfer substantial authority.

Now, in Afghanistan, as a result of the bond process, as it was called, we empowered Kharzai as the chairman of the interim government of Afghanistan. And his responsibility as the interim head was to create a constitution and organize elections thereunder. Now, it's absolutely correct that he did not have as much legitimacy as the chairman, as he eventually had as the elected leader of Afghanistan, but he had enough legitimacy as chairman to do what he needed to do, which was to organize the

constitution and elections. And we made the argument that we should be looking to the Iraqis similarly, and Ambassador Bremer made an argument in principle that, until the Iraqis have a constitution and elections they are not legitimate enough to receive substantial authority. And the question I raise in my book is if they were not legitimate, how could anybody think that Ambassador Bremer and the Americans were more legitimate.

MR. : Well, even on that, you know, by late 2003 questions of legitimacy had become very different form, you know, May of 2003; in other words, the whole gambit was good enough. I mean, it was speed versus legitimacy; how fast can we get this done and will be it good enough. In Afghanistan, it was jurgas; who knew what a jurga was, but it was good enough. I mean, it worked for them. So we were talking – you know, we had all these Iraqi exiles would come back, people were trained in constitutional law and in their own basic law, and knew how to get this done, or at least claimed they did. And the leaders that had come to the top were ready to go ahead and do that. By late October, it had become more of an occupation. We were worried about things like, you know, property rights and stuff. And at that point, legitimacy had become a very entrenched notion and being able to back out of it became a yearlong project.

MR. DUBOIS: Okay, on more question. Yes, sir.

Q: Robert Blaken (sp), from the Nixon Center. Could you shed some light on the conventional wisdom, which has it that, in your office, a group was formed to do research to criticize or to review the CIA's idea of a relationship between al Qaeda and Saddam Hussein.

MR. FEITH: Well, there was a – I alluded to this in my remarks. There was a debate within the administration over the intelligence about the Iraq-al Qaeda relationship. And that debate has been described commonly as a fight between people in my office who were arguing that it was a very close relationship, and people of the CIA who said it's not – that's not the case. And some people have even said that the CIA argued that there was no Iraq-al Qaeda relationship.

Now, all of that is wrong. What actually happened was there were people at the CIA who had a theory that said that the secular Baathists of the Iraqi regime could not cooperate because of ideological differences with the religious extremists of al Qaeda.

Now, it's perfectly okay for CIA analysts to have theories. I mean, they're experts in their field; all experts have a certain way of looking at things, and they have their theories and preconceptions, and that's all well and good. The problem was there was information that the CIA had from the mid-90s that talked about connections between Iraq and al Qaeda. And people in my office noticed that when the CIA in early 2002 was doing an assessment of the Iraq-al Qaeda relationship, the assessment either failed to mention altogether or downplayed this older CIA intelligence. And when one of the analysts in my office, it happened to be it was a policy analyst who had a DIA background, raised the question with one of her colleagues why are you not mentioning

information in the CIA's own records that is inconsistent with your theory, she was told – and this is all recounting in my book citing documents that have been published by the Pentagon – she was told if we mention that old intelligence it will just strengthen Wolfowitz's hand. And she said that's not proper. That is not a professional, proper thing for intelligence people to say and operate on.

And so she began to do a criticism and the criticism was not that the old intelligence was right. The criticism was not that Iraq and al Qaeda had an intimate relationship. The criticism was that the CIA and the intelligence community in general should not be shading and filtering the information that they had on an important subject in order to support their theory. If they want to present a theory, that's fine; if they want to discount information that's inconsistent with a theory, they should bring it forward and then explain why they discount it, but they shouldn't just ignore it. That was the nature of the dispute.

It was a challenge to the CIA's methodology and professionalism. And unfortunately, as James Risen pointed out, we lost the leak wars, and the leak wars – because we didn't leak – the leak wars had it that what we were doing was not criticizing the professionalism of the CIA, we were arguing a case against them. That's not true. We were criticizing their work on a proper, professional basis. And anyway, I try to straighten some of that out in my book and as I said, I cite documents that I'd be delighted if people actually bother to look into because the common view of this subject has been very harmful and it's wrong.

MR. RISEN: Can I make a – I wrote – I've written extensively about this. I – the one thing I would have to say is that the CIA saw it completely differently, as Doug knows. They saw this as pressure from the Rumsfeld team to get with the program. And in mid-2002 they saw this as a bunch of – and a bunch of unprofessional amateurs trying to rig the system. And the end result of this, I think, is really fascinating because it really is not so much about the Iraq-al Qaeda link.

I believe now, looking back and talking to a lot of people, that within the CIA, they exhausted so much effort managerially to fighting the Iraq-al Qaeda link that by the end of the year, when they began to get asked about weapons of mass destruction, that they didn't do a very good job of vetting the WMD intelligence. I think that they saw the Iraq-al Qaeda issue as the opening salvo in this fight between the Pentagon and the CIA and the vice president's office, and that they thought that they won this battle because they kind of fought to a draw with what they thought – they saw it as a fight to a draw with the Pentagon. And then they saw – I think they were so exhausted by that that they rushed through what they should have been doing better on WMD. That's my theory of what happened.

MR. DUBOIS: I think what we're seeing and listening to is a really crucial issue as intelligence analysis is a key ingredient to decisionmaking and what you, I think, have seen and we're going to have to bring this very rich discussion to a close unfortunately because of time constraints is a graduate seminar in war and decisionmaking, not in – and

with apologies to Herman Wolk – war and remembrance. But in any event, thank you very much panel, appreciate it. (Applause.)

(END)